



CAPITOL NEWS

FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE 21ST MICHIGAN SENATE DISTRICT

JUNE 2005

FREE FISHING WEEKEND. . . . June 11 and 12 is Free Fishing Weekend! Michigan's Free Fishing Weekends are two special days when all fishing license fees will be waived for residents and out state visitors alike on both inland and Great Lakes waters. However, all fishing regulations will still apply. The next free fishing weekend is scheduled for February 2006.

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL COMMUNITIES ROUNDTABLE.

Legislation was passed by the Michigan Senate that would create an agriculture and rural communities roundtable in the Department of Environmental Quality. Senate Bill 226 creates a roundtable to evaluate how laws, rules, and policies administered by the DEQ affect farmers, food processors, agribusinesses, and rural communities. The roundtable will provide advice and recommendations to the department and legislative committees on policies that affect agricultural businesses. This advice should help limit regulations that restrict job creation and retention within the industry, with the end goal being to improve the rural economy.



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TEACHERS COULD PURCHASE SERVICE CREDITS. Legislation that would allow public school employees to purchase service credits for service performed teaching on a military base recently passed unanimously out of the Michigan State Senate. Senate Bill 180 would amend the Public School Employees Retirement Act to allow individuals, beginning October 1, 2005, to purchase service credits for work performed as a teacher at a military base before January 31, 1991. Individuals who taught on a United States military base before 1991 had an opportunity between 1989 and 1991 to receive service credits for the work performed. After passage of the Michigan Public School Retirement Act, teaching years on a military base were no longer recognized towards retirement in Michigan.

SENATE URGES CONGRESS TO PASS BILL REGULATING NEW CASINOS. The Michigan Senate is urging Congress to pass a bill that would make common-sense changes to federal law governing authorization or approval of new Indian casinos. In a resolution introduced Thursday, the Legislature is calling for swift passage of the “Common Sense Indian Gambling Reform Act.” It would allow states to be more involved in deciding if and where new casinos are built. The bill would include: putting a stop to off-reservation tribal casinos; requiring the approval of both the governor and the Legislature for new Indian casino compacts; and directing the Department of Interior to conduct economic impact studies to determine if new casinos would have a negative impact within a 50-square-mile radius.

LEGISLATION WOULD GIVE MORE TRAIL OPTIONS FOR SNOWMOBILES. Legislation, designed to create options for Michigan’s snowmobile trail system, was unanimously passed by the Senate last week. Senate Bill 161 would allow snowmobiles to be operated within the right-of-way of limited access highways, if a trail is approved through a joint agreement by the Michigan Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources. The two departments would be in charge of establishing the details of the trail to ensure appropriate safety issues are addressed.

UPDATE—SENATE BILL 189 PASSES SENATE. In the last issue of the *Capitol News*, I mentioned that this bill would restrict the sales of products containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine at pharmacies and grocery stores. This bill has now passed the Senate.